

Date: 15th Jun'23

Islamic Studies Page 1

Q) What is Islam and list the salient features of Islam?

Ans) Introduction

- Meaning of Islam - Essence

Islam means to achieve peace - peace with Allah, peace within oneself, and peace with the creation of Allah - through wholly submitting oneself to Allah and accepting His guidance.

The term Islam derives from the three-letter Arabic root, S (س) - L (ل) - M (م), which generates words with interrelated meanings, including "surrender," "submission," "commitment" and "peace". Commonly, Islam refers to the monotheistic religion revealed to Mohammad ibn (son of) Abdullah between 610 and 632 of the Common Era.

"Islam" is an Arabic term which means to submit one's will to the will of Allah. It teaches us that there is only one divine being, one supreme Creator of the Universe. Islam is a complete, holistic way of living that covers every aspect of life. The central concept of this way of life is total submission to Allah.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) narrated the best summary of the core of Islam as follows:

"Submission means that you should bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammed is Allah's Messenger, that you should perform the ritual prayer, pay the alms tax, fast during Ramadan,

and make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to go there.

- Islamic Beliefs/Faith

There are ~~seven~~^{six} things which are essential for a Muslim to believe in. These are known as "Iman Mufassal"

* Pillars of Islamic Belief

1) Belief in the Oneness of Allah: (Monotheism / Tawheed)

Muslims believe that Allah is the creator of all things, and that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. Allah has no offspring, no race, no gender, no body, and is unaffected by the characteristics of human life.

* "Faith means to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and the Divine Decree, both good and bad."

* "O men! Call to mind the grace of Allah unto you! Is there a creator, other than Allah, to give you sustenance from Heaven or earth? There is no god but He: how then are ye deluded away from the Truth? (Surah Fatir: Verse 3)

(a) Characteristics of Allah

He is Transcendent means He is above and beyond everything that exists in the world. He is Immanent means He is close to every human and controls the whole universe.

He is Omnipotent means He is all powerful.

This shows that Allah is in control of everything that happens and there is nothing more powerful than him.

He is Beneficent means He is all-loving and cares for his creations on a personal level.

He is Merciful means He forgives the things that people do wrong.

He is Compassionate when people are sorry. He is Just, He judges people in a fair and unbiased way.

(b) Love of Allah Precedes

Our love for Allah should be at a higher level. However, our fear of Allah should also be a higher level since Allah not only controls our life in this world, but He will judge us in the Hereafter.

(c) Foundation of Muslim Faith

Belief in Allah is the foundation for which a Muslim's faith is built upon. It is to believe that Allah is the Only Creator, Sustainer, King and Planner of everything in existence.

* "Take not with Allah another object of worship; or thou (O man!) will sit in disgrace and distribution." (Surah-Al-Isra: Verse 22)

* "His throne extends over the Heavens and the earth and the up-keep of either (ie heaven or the earth) is not a burden unto Him..." (Quran 2: 255)

(d) Cornerstone of Islamic Faith

The main message of Islam is monotheism. Belief in monotheism is the cornerstone of the Islamic faith. Monotheism term used to refer to the belief in the existence of only one Allah. This is Allah who created us and who continues to sustain us. He is the one who created the heavens, the earth, the stars, the mountains, the oceans, humans, animals, plants and everything in existence.

2) Belief in the Angels of Allah

Muslims believe in angels, unseen beings who worship Allah and carry out Allah's orders throughout the universe. The angel Gabriel brought the divine revelation to the Prophets.

(9) Communicators of Allah's message to Prophets

Muslims accept the existence of Angels. They are believed to be created from light and have no physical bodies although they do have the ability to take on human form. Islam teaches that Angels have no free will, which means that they cannot make their own choices. They are completely obedient to Allah's command. Angels communicate the message of Allah to His Prophets and who in turn share them with human beings.

* "They speak not before He speaks, ^{and} they act (in all things) by His Command (Surah-Al-Anbiya: Verse 27)

(b) Belief in Malaikah (Angels)

It is a compulsory act, a requirement of being a Muslim. This belief helps Muslims to understand Allah better. Muslims feel a sense of Awe and amazement towards Allah. It is transcendent. Jibrael (AS) is the angel who used to reveal the Quran to the Holy Prophet (PBUH). AS ~~the~~ Holy Prophet (PBUH) is accepted to have brought the final, perfect message from Allah. Angels are not able to disobey Allah, and they carry out all the tasks entrusted to them by Allah.

* "O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded" (Surah-At-Tahrim: Verse 6)

(c) Creation without Free Will

However, humans were given free will, whereas angels are always obedient to the will of Allah. He is the one who created them in the first place. All knowledge we have of angels was revealed to us by Allah through the Prophets and Messengers He sent to humanity.

(d) Followers of Allah's Command

Angels are from the world of the unseen. They were created to obey the commands of Allah and they never transgress His laws or commands.

(e) Faith Remains Incomplete without Faith inAngels

Angels Jibrael (AS) (Gabriel), Mikail, Israfeel and Malik have been given names - they are the creation of Allah. Muslims also believe in the attributes of the angels that have been described within the Quran and the teachings of Prophet (PBUH). Angels were created from light and the angel Jibrael (AS) has six hundred wings.

It is Muslims' believe that every human being has two angels with them who records all of their good and bad deeds in a book.

* "Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings) learn (and noted them) one sitting on the right and one on the left." (Surah Qaf: Verse 17)

* "If Allah were to enlarge the provision for His Servants, they would indeed transgress beyond all bounds through the earth; but he sends (it) down in due measure as He pleases. For He is with His Servants Well-acquainted, Watchful." (Surah Ash-Shura: Verse 27)

(f) Appointed to Perform Certain Tasks

The angels have been appointed to perform certain tasks. Hazrat Jibrail (AS) has been given the duty to deliver the revelation to all the messengers. Malik who has appointed and entrusted with Hell. Ridwan who was entrusted with Paradise. Israfeel has been entrusted with blowing the Trumpet which signals the beginning of the Day of Judgement.

"Allah enlarges or grants by strict measures the sustenance to whomsoever He pleases. The worldly folk rejoice in the life of this world; but the life of this world is of little comfort in the Hereafter." (Surah Ar Aad: Verse 26)

The Quran stresses on our 'believing' that under this superficial and apparent inequality lies hidden some important 'sign'

"Do they not see that Allah enlarges the provision and restricts it to whomsoever He pleases? Verily in that are signs for those who believe." (Surah Ar. Room: Verse 37)

(a) Holy Books
 3) Belief in the Books of Allah - Importance

Muslims believe Allah is behind the messages they contain and therefore they are a form of revelation about Allah, showing Muslims what Allah is like. Muslims believe that the Holy books contain truths from Allah and

therefore should not be questioned nor altered.

Muslims believe they should submit to Allah. The goal of all these messages in the Holy books was to guide people to worship Allah only, and to liberate humanity from the oppression of worshipping false gods such as idols or kings. These messages were sent to help humans establish a set of laws that would enable them to minimize injustice and evil actions and to make them live happy and fruitful lives. These messages are known as the Holy Books. They include the Torah, Bible and the Quran.

"It is He who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgement between right

and wrong)." (Surah Aal-e-Imran: Verse 3)

- The ultimate word:

Quran, which is Allah's final revelation, guides Muslims in how Allah wants them to live. The books show that Allah wants to interact with his creation, specifically humans. Muslims believe they can get closer to Allah and understand Him better by reading His words.

Quran is the Islamic Holy Book. It is the final and perfect message received from Allah by the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Islam

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is centered on these teachings. It is obligatory for Muslims to believe in all the Books which Allah has revealed and in all the Prophets and Messengers whom Allah has sent. "And We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book (this Quran) in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it and watching over it (determining what is true therein).

So judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging away from the truth that has come to you. To each of you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way. If Allah willed, He would have made you one nation, but that (He) may test you in what He has given you; so strive as in a race in good deeds. The return of you (all) is to Allah; then He will inform you about that in which you used to differ." (Surah - Al - Maida: Verse 48)

4) Belief in the Prophets (Messengers) of Allah

(a) Communicators of Allah's message to Human Beings

Muslims believe that one of the ways Allah communicates with human beings is through Prophets. A Prophet is a messenger from Allah and the link between Allah and humans. Messages are usually communicated to the Prophets through angels. The Prophet's messages are considered to be the word of Allah.

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and recorded in the Holy books. Nubuwwah is the Islamic term for Prophet hood. The Islamic word Risalah literally refers to the communication link or channel between Allah and humane. Prophets recognized in Islam include Hazrat Nuh (AS), Hazrat Ibrahim (AS), Hazrat Musa (AS), Hazrat Isa (AS) and our Holy Prophet (PBUH), the most important who is considered the Founder of Islam. As a sign of respect to Muhammad, Muslims say 'peace be upon him' after his name.

(b) Risalah

Literally, means message in Arabic. It is the communication channel between Allah and humanity. Muslims believe that Allah gave message to Prophets (Nubuwwah), or messengers and thereby revealed Himself and His words. This is called revelation. The messages that Allah sent to the Prophets are recorded in the Islamic Holy books and the religion is based on these messages. Muslim tradition states that there have been 124,000 prophets in total. The Quran name 25 prophets, many of whom also appear in the Holy books of Judaism and Christianity.

"Of some messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not; and to Moses Allah spoke direct."

(Surah-An-Nisa: Verse 164)

Muslims believe that all the prophets brought the same message. Allah loves prophets and wants to communicate with them through people and Holy books. He (Allah) wants to share his message about how he wants them to live. Humanity is important to Allah and He is omnipresent, watching over them.

c) Messengers vs Prophets

Messengers are those individuals to whom Allah sent revelations constituting a new message for humanity. For eg: Hazrat Musa (AS) was a messenger whose message was the Torah, Hazrat Issa (AS) was a messenger whose message was the Bible. Mohammad was a messenger whose message was the Quran. On the other hand,

Prophets were assigned the task of calling people to an existing message. For eg: Prophets Hazrat Dawood (AS) and Hazrat Sulaiman (AS) did not come with a new message, but were calling their people to abide by the existing message of their people.

"And verily, We have sent into every nation a messenger (proclaiming): 'Worship Allah (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) all false deities.'

Then of them were some whom Allah guided and of them were some upon whom the straying was justified. So travel through the land and see what was the end of those who denied." (Surah - An-Nahl: Verse 36)

Allah has given different abilities to all Prophets. For eg: Hazrat Issa (AS) was given the ability to heal the sick and even to revive the dead by the will of Allah. There are 25 messengers who have been mentioned by name in the Quran.

(d) Status of Prophets / Role Models to their Nations

Five messengers were given the special title of the Messengers of Strong Will.

For eg: Hazrat Nuh (AS), Ibrahim (AS), Mussa (AS), Issa (AS) and Mohammad (PBUH)

Every messenger was sent to a specific nation. Mohammad (PBUH) was final and sent to all of mankind. Allah chose the Prophets and Messengers as the best role model to their nations. Allah bestowed upon them knowledge, understanding, guidance, miracles, protection from falling into sin, and honor.

"Those were the (prophets) who received Allah's guidance: Copy the guidance they received; Say:

"No reward for this do I ask of you: This is no less than a message for the nations."

(Surah-Al-Anaam: Verse 90)

5) Belief in the Day of Judgement (Hereafter)

(a) Essence - System of Accountability

Muslims believe that there will be Day of Judgement when the whole world ends.

"(Then) shall each soul know what it hath sent forward and (what it hath) kept back."

(Surah-Al-Infitar: Verse 5)

Muslims believe that God will hold every human being accountable for each of their actions no matter how small. Allah will decide who should be rewarded with a place in Al-Jannah (Paradise) and who should be punished in Jahannam, or Hell. This belief in the Day of Judgement directs their behaviour in their lives on earth, knowing that their future life is dependent on this.

On this Day of Judgement, Allah judges mankind for their deeds. Every human being will be resurrected from their graves and will be given their book of deeds - (both good and bad). They will regret the sins they committed as well as the good deeds they had missed.

« To Him belong the Keys of the heavens and the earth; He enlarges and restricts the sustenance to whom He wills; for He knows full well all things »:

(Surah Ash-Shura: Verse 12)

« Or created matter which, in your minds, is hardest (to be raised up), - (Yet shall ye be raised up)! » then will they say: « Who will cause us to return? » Say: « He who created you first! » Then will they wag their heads towards thee, and say, « What will that be? » Say, « Maybe it will be quite soon! » (Surah Al-Isra: Verse 51)

« Behold! in the creation of the Heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, - there are indeed Signs for men of understanding, »
(Surah Aql-e-Imran: Verse 190)

Lastly, Life Hereafter is necessary "to explain to mankind as to wherein they differed among themselves and to show to the unbelievers that they were liars." (Surah-An-Nahl: Verse 39)

(c) Belief in Divine Decree (Predestination / Al-Qadar)

(a) Allah knows the Best for Us

Predestination is the idea that Allah knows everything, and Muslims believe that although human beings have free will to make their own choices, Allah anticipates and knows what will happen. Muslims believe that they need to trust Allah to know what is best for them. Muslims believe that Allah is all knowing. He knows what actions we will take before we take them. Humans were given free will and they have full control over their actions. Allah knows all events that have occurred in the past or will occur in the future.

(b) Allah Decree for Every Single Creation

Al-Qadar is what Allah decrees for every single creation based on what has preceded in terms of His knowledge and in accordance with His Wisdom.

"What comes to you of good is from Allah, but what comes to you of evil, [O man], is from yourself. And We have sent you, [O Muhammad], to the people as a messenger, and sufficient is Allah as Witness (Surah-An-Nisa: Verse 79)

(c) Al-Qadr and Human Freedom

Allah is controlling everything. Islam holds that Allah gave humans free will when he created them. Humans have choices and can decide what to do in any given situation. Humans are responsible for their own sins. Allah knows every human so well - whatever one makes his decision or choose to make.

(d) Belief in Al-Qadr for Muslims

Muslims live in the knowledge of Al-Qadr. Every thing happens for a reason that only Allah knows as He has the control of all things. Belief in Al-Qadr affects their lives because they want to be rewarded rather than punished after death, so they try to live in the way Allah wants.

"Praise and glory belong only to Allah, the Sustainer of all the Worlds, the most Beneficent and the most Merciful, the Lord of the Day of Judgement. It is thee that we worship and of thee we seek help and succor..."

Everything is governed by divine decree, namely that whatever happens in one's life is preordained, and that believers should respond to the good or bad that befalls them with thankfulness or patience.